Crafting Your ERC Proposal: Structure, Evaluation Criteria, and Writing Approach

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Webinar Consolidator Grant 2026

28 de octubre de 2025

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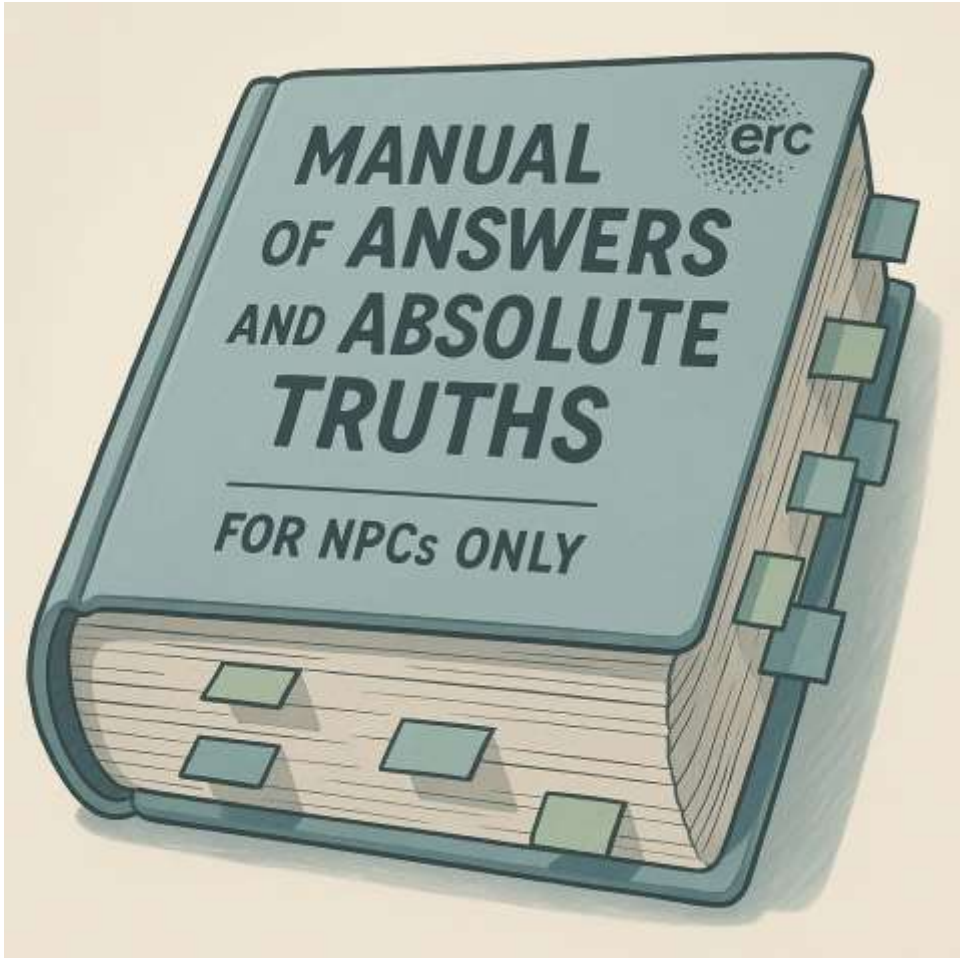
DISCLAIMER

- The advice, interpretations, and guidance we share during our sessions are based solely on our experience, observations, and accumulated knowledge.
- They do not necessarily reflect any official position and should not replace a careful reading of the ERC's guidelines and reference documents.



Structure of the proposal

Consolidator Grant 2026 - Structure of the proposal

THE ERC FULL PROPOSAL

- **Part A** (the administrative form)
- **Part B1**
- **Part B2**
- **Mandatory documentation**
- **Additional supporting documentation**, if applicable, related to ethics and security issues.

One deadline | 2 steps evaluation process

Consolidator Grant 2026 - Structure of the proposal

PREVIOUS WP

Part B1 - pdf

Cover Page and summary (1p)

Extended Synopsis (5p)

Curriculum vitae + Track-record (4p)

Evaluated in Step 1

WP 2026

Part B1 - pdf

Cover Page and summary (1p)

Part I of the Scientific Proposal (5p)

Curriculum vitae + Track-record (4p)

Evaluated in Step 1

Consolidator Grant 2026 - Structure of the proposal

One deadline | 2 steps evaluation process

PREVIOUS WP

Part B2 - pdf

(14p)

Sa: SoA & objectives

Sb: Methodology

funding ID

NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2)

WP 2026

Part B2 - pdf

(7p)

Part II of the Scientific Proposal

Appendix: funding ID

NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2)

Consolidator Grant 2026 - Structure of the proposal

One deadline | 2 steps evaluation process

PREVIOUS WP

Part A – online forms

A1 General Information
A2 Participants
A3 Budget: table + description (Section C. Resources)
A4 Ethics and security
A5 Other questions
- % Time commitment
- Excluded Reviewers (up to 3)

Annexes

HI support letter
Ethics and security issues
PhD certificate (StG, CoG)
Eligibility Extension Request (StG, CoG)

WP 2026

Part A – online forms

A1 General Information
A2 Participants
A3 Budget: table + description (Section C. Resources)
A4 Ethics and security
A5 Other questions
- % Time commitment
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Annexes

HI support letter
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Consolidator Grant 2026 - Structure of the proposal

One deadline | 2 steps evaluation process

The ERC full proposal = part B1 + part B2+ Part A

Part B1 - pdf

Cover Page and summary (1p)

Part I of the Scientific Proposal (5p)

Curriculum vitae + Track-record (4p)

Evaluated in Step 1

Part B2 - pdf

Part II of the Scientific Proposal **(7p)**

Appendix: funding ID

NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2)

Part A – online forms

A1 General Information
A2 Participants
A3 Budget: table + description (Section C. Resources)
A4 Ethics and security
A5 Other questions
- % Time commitment
- Excluded Reviewers (up to 3)

Annexes

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Evaluation questions

Research Project – Evaluation Elements

At Step 1

- To what extent does the research address **important scientific questions**?
- To what extent are the **project's objectives ambitious** and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?

At Step 2

- To what extent are the research **methodology** and **working arrangements** appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the **timescales and resources** adequate and properly justified?

Principal Investigator - Intellectual capacity and creativity
At Step 1 and Step 2:

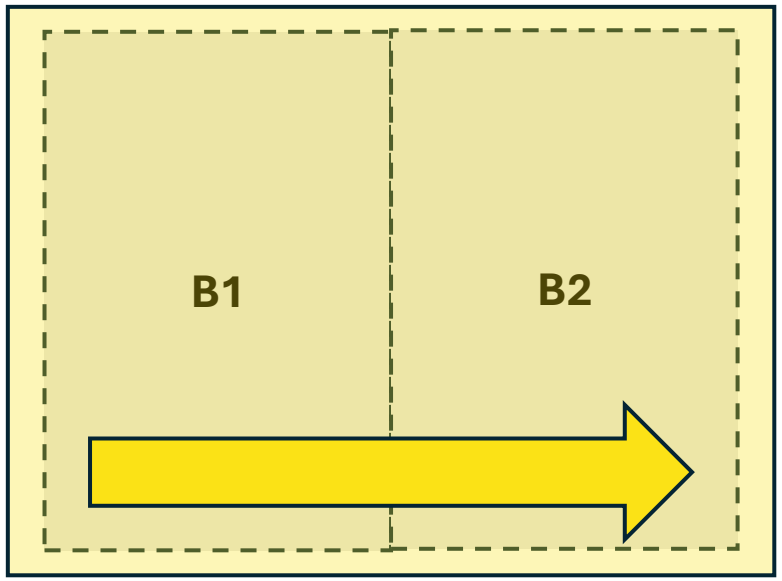
- To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the **ability to conduct ground-breaking research**?
- To what extent does/do the PI(s) provide evidence of **creative and original thinking**?
- To what extent does/do the PI(s) have the required **scientific expertise and capacity** to successfully execute the project?

Approach to writing

Where do I start writing?

No overlap of content.

- This is where you present the core idea.
- Your goal here is to convince the evaluators that your proposal is worth funding.



- This is where you explain how you will implement what you promised in B1.
- Your goal here is to convince the evaluators that your proposal is sound.

Together, they build a compelling and credible proposal.

Consolidator Grant 2026 - Scientific Proposal

	Part I (5 pages)	Part II (7 pages)
Objective	To convince the evaluation panel that the proposal presents an **original and creative idea** addressing an **important scientific question**, with the potential to **advance the frontiers of knowledge**	Explain **how** the project will be implemented in detail.
Content	- State of the knowledge - Scientific question and objectives - Overall approach or research strategy - *Expected contribution to the field*	- Detailed methodology - Work plan and timeline - Risk assessment and mitigation - Additional background (if needed)
Tone	- Visionary, conceptual, persuasive: focused on scientific ambition, without technical detail.	- Precise, technical, and implementation-focused: aimed at experts in the field.

** Assumed by the Spanish NCPs*

Part I of the Scientific Proposal

PART I

- State of the knowledge
- Scientific question and objectives
- Overall approach or research strategy
- Expected contribution to the field

Avoid excessive use of technical jargon: Although panel members are experts, it is essential that your proposal be understandable to a broad academic audience.

Do not repeat statements without evidence: Instead of stating that your project is ‘innovative’ or ‘ambitious,’ provide concrete evidence to support these claims

Part I of the Scientific Proposal

PART I

- State of the knowledge
- Scientific question and objectives
- Overall approach or research strategy
- Expected contribution to the field

Start by clearly stating the overall objective of your project: this gives evaluators a lens through which to read the state of the art.

Don't overexplain the state of the art: The SoA should reflect what's essential to your project and that includes your own work.

The state of the art is not a literature review: it's a strategic selection of what matters to your idea.

Avoid excessive use of technical jargon: Although panel members are experts, it is essential that your proposal be understandable to a broad academic audience.

Identification of knowledge gaps: The project systematically highlights what remains unresolved, underexplored, or misunderstood.

Part I of the Scientific Proposal

PART I

- State of the knowledge
- Scientific question and objectives
- Overall approach or research strategy
- Expected contribution to the field

Explain why it is significant and how its resolution will contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

Clearly articulate what makes your research idea unique and how it differs from existing approaches.

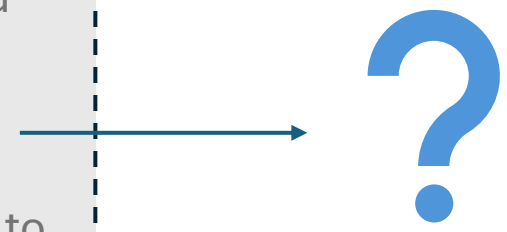
Make sure the proposal reflects your own scientific vision: evaluators are looking for ideas that are genuinely yours, not extensions of your supervisor's or host institution's work.

Justify the need for the project: Explain why it is essential to carry out this research and how it will contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge.

Part I of the Scientific Proposal

PART I

- State of the knowledge
- Scientific question and objectives
- Overall approach or research strategy
- Expected contribution to the field



Debates on feasibility often lead to overly conservative assessments:

Not judging feasibility means not focusing on the details of the methodology.

Exception: when the methodology is the “idea.”

https://erc.europa.eu/news-events/news/erc-president-explains-changes-erc-evaluation-procedures

Curriculum vitae and Track Record (4 pages)

New **CV and Track Record template** (4 pages)

Personal details: education, key qualifications, current position(s) and relevant previous positions.

Research achievements (<=10) a list of up to 10 research outputs:

- demonstrating advancement in the field
- emphasis on more recent achievements
- short narrative on significance of achievements

Peer recognition: a list of selected examples of significant prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.

Additional information:

- career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
- other contributions to research community

A short explanation of the significance of the selected outputs, the role of the applicant in producing each of them, and how they demonstrate the applicant's capacity to successfully carry out their proposed project may be included, as well as a short explanation of the importance of the listed examples of significant peer recognition.

The applicant may also include relevant information on, for example, **career breaks, unusual career paths**, as well as any particularly noteworthy **contributions to the research community**. These will not in themselves be evaluated but are important to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing the principal investigator's research achievements and peer recognition in relation to their career stage.

CV & TR: Diversity of achievements

Research achievements (<=10)

COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS RESOURCES

More information: http://gboleda.utcompling.com/resources.

Corpora	**Leader**, Wikicorpus: Freely available Wikipedia-based trilingual corpus (Catalan, Spanish, English), automatically annotated, over 750 million words.
	Coordinator, CUCWEB: 166-million word Web corpus for Catalan, automatically annotated.
Tools	Collaborating researcher, POS-Tagger for Old Spanish. Freely available as part of the open source suite of language analyzers FreeLing.
	Collaborating researcher, CatCG: Tagger and shallow parser for Catalan.
Datasets	**Leader**, four freely available (CC BY-SA) semantic datasets on adjective semantics and regular polysemy.
	Collaborating researcher in a fifth dataset on the semantics of color terms.

https://gboleda.github.io/proposals/B1-AMORE-ERC_StG_2016-def.pdf

Selected publicly available tools and resources

- **WaCky** (with Silvia Bernardini and others): huge linguistically annotated corpora for multiple languages
- **DM** (with Alessandro Lenci): precompiled corpus-based semantic model and utilities
- **Semantic norms** for German and Italian (with Gerhard Kremer)
- **zipfR** (with Stefan Evert): a toolkit for lexical statistics in R
- **BootCaT** (with Silvia Bernardini): a toolkit for bootstrapping corpora and terms from the Web
- **Morph-it!** (with Eros Zanchetta): a free Italian morphological lexicon
- **La Repubblica corpus** (with Silvia Bernardini and others): a large corpus of Italian newspaper text

http://marcobaroni.org/composes/composes_ERC_2011_StG_PartB1.pdf

CV & TR: Significance of achievements

Section c: Ten years track-record

Publication profile

Publications with ≥100 Google Scholar citations (since September 2010): 17

10 significant publications since Sept. 2010 (GS citation counts in parenthesis, retrieved on July 22nd 2020):

M. Baroni and A. Lenci. 2010. Distributional Memory: A general framework for corpus-based semantics. *Computational Linguistics* 36(4), **2020 10-year ACL test-of-time award** (700). **Significance:** *Early work on general-purpose induction of distributed linguistic representations from data, also establishing the methodology of wide-range linguistic probing of the knowledge encoded in such representations.*

M. Baroni and R. Zamparelli. 2010. Nouns are vectors, adjectives are matrices: Representing adjective-noun constructions in semantic space. *Proceedings of EMNLP*, **2020 10-year ACL test-of-time award nomination** (497). **Significance:** *Early work on compositionally deriving distributed representations of phrases, anticipating deep learning models developed for the same purpose.*

E. Bruni, N. Tran and **M. Baroni**. 2014. Multimodal distributional semantics. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* 49, **2017 IJCAI-JAIR best paper prize for the preceding 5 years** (644). **Significance:** *The pioneering work of my team on learning multimodal concept representations from visual and textual data is summarized in this article.*

M. Baroni, G. Dinu and G. Kruszewski. 2014 Don't count, predict! A systematic comparison of context-counting vs. context-predicting semantic vectors. *Proceedings of ACL* (1322). **Significance:** *This was one of the first papers demonstrating the power of new-generation neural-network-based word embeddings, proposing several tests that became standard in the community.*

T. Mikolov, A. Joulin and **M. Baroni**. 2016. A roadmap towards machine intelligence. *Proceedings of CICLing* (90). **Significance:** *An extended "vision" paper on the central role of communication for flexible AI.*

https://marcobaroni.org/alien/ALIEN-ERC_AdG_2020_B1.pdf

CV & TR: Personal Statement

Carling Part B1 *FUMI*

Section c: Early achievements track-record

Since my first peer-reviewed article in 2002, I have gradually achieved internationally recognition as a leading scholar of migration. My primary areas of expertise have been **migration processes** and the subsequent **transnational practices**. I have maintained a disciplinary identity as a human geographer, but also engaged extensively with migration research in a range of other disciplines, reflected, for instance, in co-authorship with both economists and anthropologists. Much of my research has been **theoretically oriented**, based on **empirical data**. I have invested in **broad methodological competence**, yielding expertise in both ethnographic fieldwork and survey data collection, and command of corresponding specialized software (*Stata, NVivo*).

Fuente: Pathways to an ERC Grant: Learning from Success and Failure . Jørgen Carling. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
https://jorgencarling.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/carling-erc-cv-and-track-record.pdf

CV & TR: Particularities of your field

Top ten publications in the last ten years

Note: In my field, the top conferences are ACM CHI and ACM UIST. Publication in these conferences is considered as prestigious as in the top journals in the field (ACM TOCHI, IJHCS). I work collaboratively with students and colleagues. As the most senior researcher, my name is usually last in the list of authors. However I only co-sign papers for which I have substantially contributed to both the work and the writing.

My application in **2014**

The followings are five selected papers. ...

Improvement in **2016**

In theoretical computer science, the most important venues of publications are conferences and not journals. STOC and FOCS are widely recognized as the most prestigious conferences in the field worldwide. I have published X papers in FOCS and STOC ...

The followings are five selected papers. ...

CV & TR: Short explanation of the importance

Scientific community activity

- **Referee** for peer-reviewed journal: Physical Review Letters, Angewandte Chem., Advanced Materials, Advanced Functional Materials, Biomaterials, Journal of Materials Research, Materials Research Bulletin, Surface and Coatings Technology, Composites Part A, Crystal Growth and Design, Journal of the American Ceramic Society, Chemical Engineering Journal, International Journal of Applied Ceramic Technology, Biomedical Materials, International Journal of Materials Research, Polymer, Ceramics International, Biomacromolecules, Journal of the Royal Society Interface, Journal of Microscopy, Journal of Chemical Technology & Biotechnology, Acta Materiala, Journal of the European Ceramic Society
- **Contributing editor** for the Journal of the American Ceramic Society
- **Referee** for the French National Research Agency (ANR, 2008 and 2009), NSF career program (2010)
- **Advisory board** for ECERS 2009 and CIMTEC 2011
- **Initiator and co-organizer** of the 1st International and Multidisciplinary Workshop on the Solidification of Colloidal Suspensions (2010, Avignon, France). Co-organized by the CNRS, Saint-Gobain and the University of Oxford

https://figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/My_successful_ERC_Starting_Grant_Proposal/7110767

Other activities

- **Workshop (co-)organization**: GEMS 2010 (submitted), ESSLI 2008 Distributional Lexical Semantics (Hamburg), Contextual Information in Semantic Space Models at Context 2007 (Roskilde), Web as Corpus 1 (2005, Forlì), 2 (2005, Birmingham) and 3 (2006, Trento)
- The Italian part-of-speech tagger developed by my team was ranked second best in the **EVALITA 2007 evaluation campaign**
- Co-organized the first **CLEANEVAL shared task** for Web page cleaning (2007)
- Co-founder and secretary of the **Special Interest Group** of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL) **on Web as Corpus**
- **ESSLLI 2006 course** instructor (with Stefan Evert): Counting words: an introduction to lexical statistics (Malaga)
- I maintain, with Stefan Evert, **SIGIL**, an **online introduction to statistics for linguists**
- In **program committee** of more than 10 international conferences (including ACL, EACL, COLING, IWCS, EMNLP – best reviewer award at EMNLP 2010) and more than 15 international workshops
- **Reviewer** for more than 15 **journals** (including Natural Language Engineering, IEEE Intelligent Systems, Language Resources and Evaluation Journal, Cognitive Linguistics, Europhysics Letters, Artificial Intelligence Journal, Morphology and the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America) and 2 **books**
- **Reviewer** for several **funding agencies**, including the US National Science Foundation and the UK Economic and Social Research Council

http://marcobaroni.org/composes/composes_ERC_2011_StG_PartB1.pdf

CV & TR: Peer recognition

- Fellowships & Awards (including declined offers)
- Supervision of Students (demonstrates ability to lead a team and build a research school)
- Teaching Activities (if applicable) (highlight thematic relevance to the project and specify the level)
- Organisation of Scientific Meetings (shows leadership)
- Institutional Responsibilities (demonstrates administrative and management capacity)
- Reviewing Activities (regular reviewer, editorial boards, etc.)
- Memberships in Scientific Societies
- Major Collaborations (include names, institutions, consortia, co-authors, etc.)
- Commissions of Trust (e.g. expert roles in national plans, COST Actions, etc.)
- Invited Presentations at International Conferences or Advanced Schools (keynote speaker, relevant events in your field)

Not exhaustive list

CV & TR: Additional Information

Additional information:

- career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
- other contributions to research community

The applicant may also include relevant information on, for example, **career breaks, unusual career paths, as well as any particularly noteworthy contributions to the research community.**

These will not in themselves be evaluated but are important to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing the principal investigator's research achievements and peer recognition in relation to their career stage.

Part II of the Scientific Proposal

PART II

- Detailed methodology
- Work plan and timeline
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Additional background (if needed)

Be precise, technical, and implementation-focused: this section is read by experts in your field.

Ensure conceptual continuity. Part II should build on the objectives and strategy from Part I, but don't repeat them. Instead, show how they were implemented.

Part II of the Scientific Proposal

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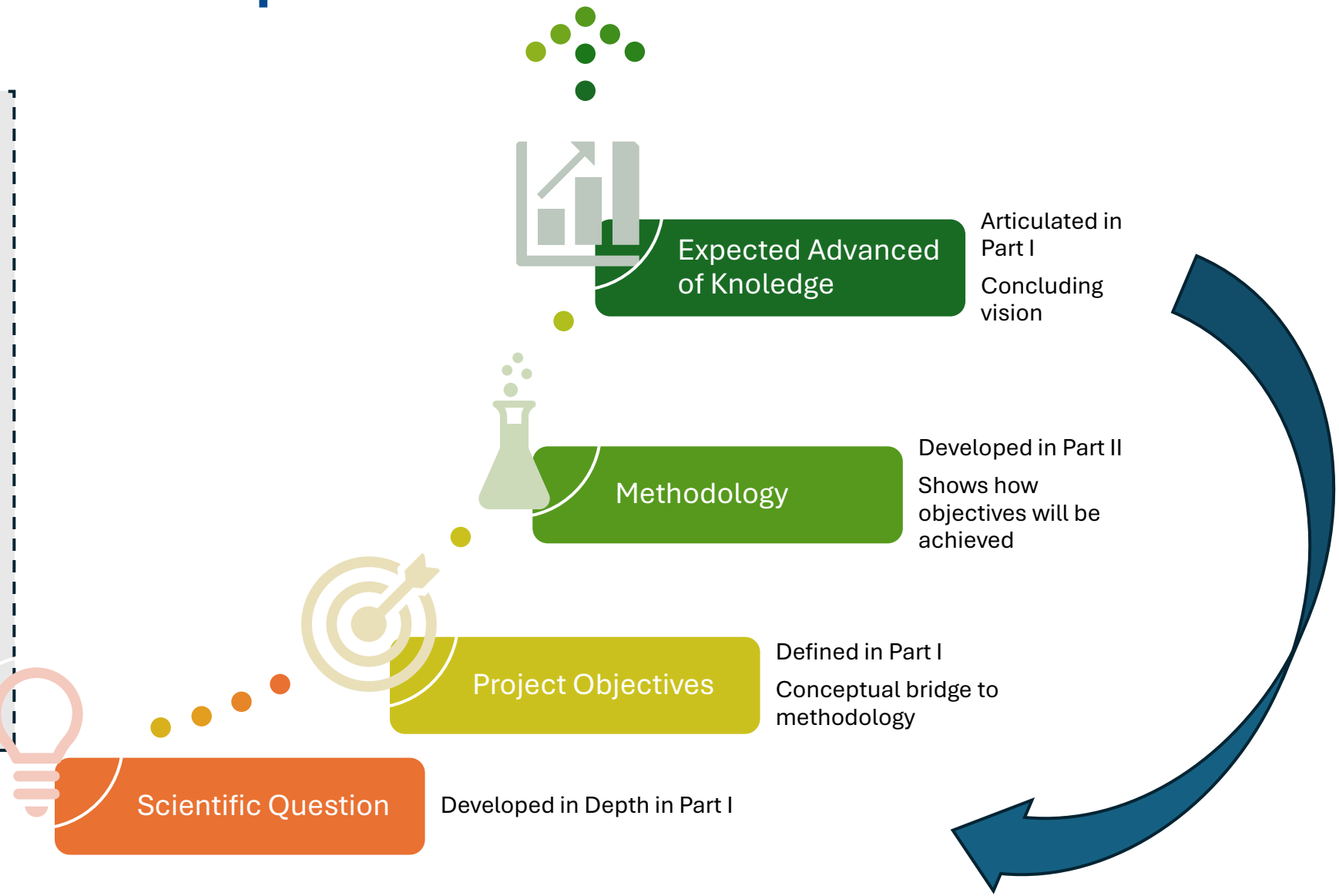


Part II of the Scientific Proposal

PART II

- Detailed methodology
- Work plan and timeline
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Additional background (if needed)

Provide a clear structure (Keep it simple!): Break down the project into tasks or work packages with timelines and responsibilities.

Show feasibility: Demonstrate that the plan is realistic and achievable within the proposed timeframe.

Align with objectives: Ensure that each part of the work plan contributes directly to the overall project goals.

Use visuals when helpful: Gantt charts, tables, or diagrams can improve clarity , but only if they are well explained.

Part II of the Scientific Proposal

PART II

- Detailed methodology
- Work plan and timeline
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Additional background (if needed)

Don't hide the weaknesses of your proposal: acknowledge them and show how you plan to address them.

Be proactive, not defensive: Present risks as challenges you've already thought through and show how your plan adapts to them.

Avoid generic mitigation strategies: Be specific about how you'll detect and respond to problems.

Link risks to specific work packages: Make it easy for evaluators to see where risks lie and how they're being managed within the structure of your project.

Part II of the Scientific Proposal

PART II

- Detailed methodology
- Work plan and timeline
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Additional background (if needed)

Use this section to complement Form A: Provide narrative explanations for budget items that may not be fully clear in the administrative form.

Link budget to your methodology and work plan: Show how each cost supports specific tasks or team roles described in the proposal.

Justify non-standard or sensitive costs: If you're requesting unusual resources, explain why they are essential and how they will be used.

Research strategy (Part I) vs. Methodology (Part II)

B1

Purpose: : Convince the panel that your idea is original, ambitious, and scientifically sound.

- Style: **Concise, clear, accessible to non-specialists**
- What to include:
  - Overview of the scientific approach.
  - Preliminary evidence (own data, pilots, key publications).
  - Added value compared to the SoA and the competitors.
  - *General risk evaluation and how you plan to address them. ¿?*
  - Key collaborations that contribute capacity (without detailing contracts).

B2

Purpose: Show that you have thought **thoroughly** about how to execute each part of the project.

- Style: **Technical, rigorous, detailed**, for experts in your field.
- What to include:
  - Refer back to the objectives in Part I and focus on how your methods will achieve them → no need to restate them.
  - Specific methods you will use at each stage.
  - Methodological justification
  - Technical and human resources required.
  - Collaboration details: roles, contributions, planned agreements.

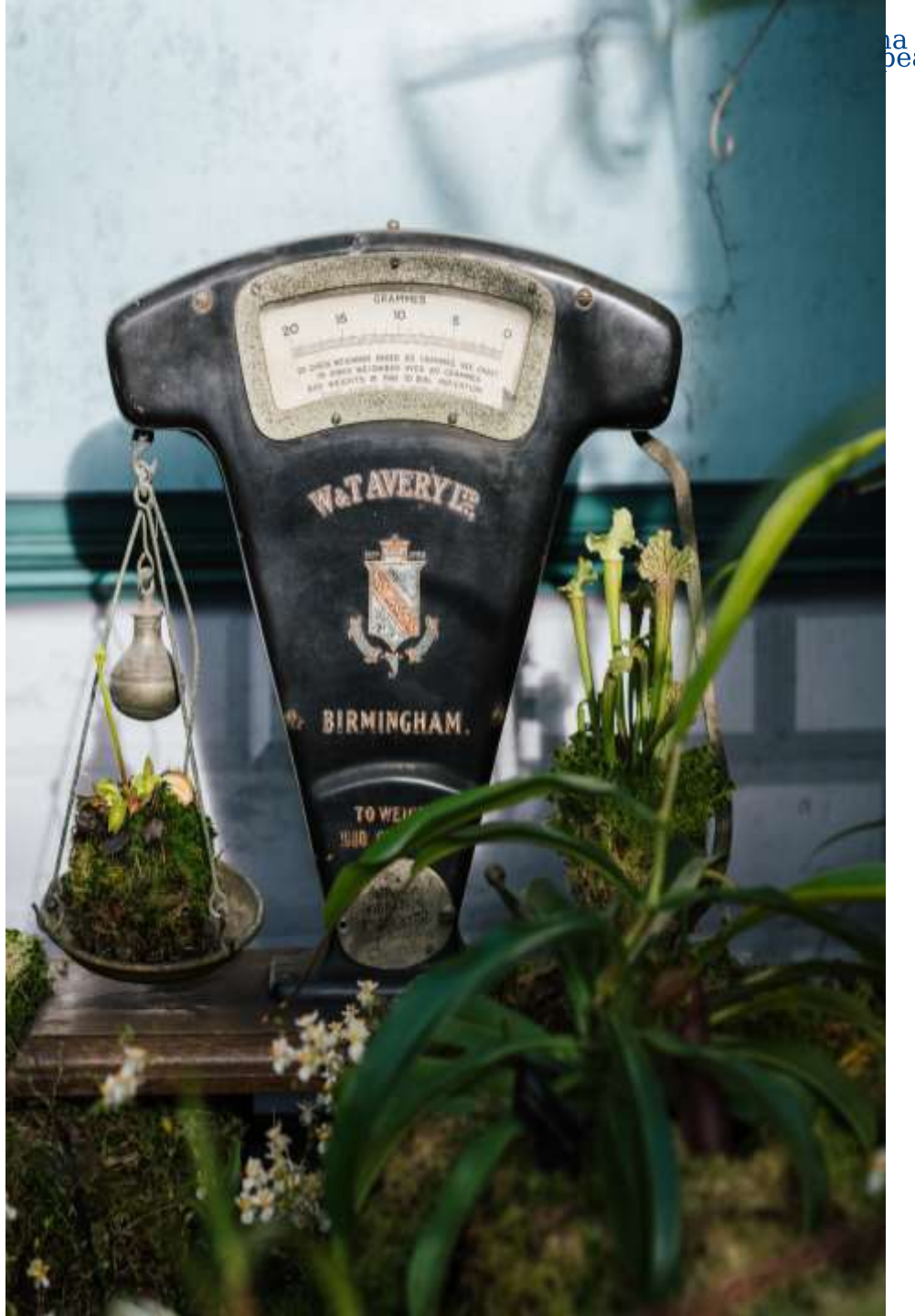
Is it incremental research?

- **Where did the idea come from?** From you? From your community?
- If you can submit it to other calls for proposals **(splitting the budget)**
- We should present the project idea as a **big step forward** compared to the state of the art.
- INCREMENTAL ≠ RISK

It is normal that what you propose is related to your background, experience and achievements.

The key is that this is what will advance research and knowledge far beyond the SoA= High Gain.

Challenge: Find the right balance between ambition and feasibility



Final recommendations

Think in two complementary parts: Part I (Vision) & Part II (implementation)

Be clear, concrete and persuasive: avoid jargon, justify claims, show your voice

Ambition ≠ Technical complexity: focus on advancing knowledge

Transformative impact: open new research avenues, inspire others, etc.

Build trust with the panel: show leadership, coherence and execution capacity.

Gracias